

Washington, D.C. Congressman Sanford Bishop released the following statement in response to the President's State of the Union address:

"I'm pleased that President Bush is following the example Congressional Democrats set last year by urging action on issues like health care, energy, education, and caring for our nation's veterans. However, given the President's track record on implementing his own policy initiatives, I am hesitant to endorse any of these plans outright.

I do believe the President and the bi-partisan Congressional leadership have crafted a good plan to jump start the economy. Action is needed to lighten the financial burden faced by Americans and this timely, targeted, and temporary package will provide some relief.

The President also spoke tonight about reforming the appropriations process. While that is a worthy goal, it is – again – not original. Already in 2007, Democrats instituted unprecedented accountability and disclosure in the appropriations process. We also slashed the amount of earmarks in Appropriations bills by 43%.

Speaking as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I believe the process could be more transparent. But the current process also allows a unique opportunity for elected representatives to bring home just a fraction of the tax dollars sent to Washington for projects that cannot be funded at the state or local level.

To me, it makes no sense to take this power away from representatives elected by the people of Georgia and give it to a nameless, faceless, Washington agency bureaucrat who probably couldn't find the Second Congressional District on a map. I believe other Members – Republicans and Democrats alike – share this point of view and there will be ample opportunity to voice it moving forward.

On Iraq, though the surge is reducing violence, political progress must be achieved in order for the strategy to have a truly meaningful outcome. The Prime Minister must lead his government to action on the oil revenue sharing law, get agreement on power sharing between the national government and the provinces, and provide for potable water and electricity and a trained Iraqi security force. Lacking those accomplishments, the military success of the surge will be a wasted opportunity.

Ultimately, the proof is in the pudding: when the President releases his budget during the first week in February, we will truly have a better grasp of the policies laid out this evening. In the meantime, I look forward to getting down to business and stand ready to work with my Congressional colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this ambitious agenda."